

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7100

INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA

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AMCONSUL IBADAN

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SUBJECT: FMG DEALS FROM STRENGTH

REF: LAGOS A-255, NOVEMBER 25, 1974

SUMMARY: DISPLAYING SEEMING CONFIDENCE IN ITS STAYING
POWER, FMG HAS BEEN TAKING FIRM LINE WITH THOSE WHO SEEM TO
CHALLENGE ANY PART OF ITS AUTHORITY. END SUMMARY

1. IN PAST COUPLE OF WEEKS, FMG HAS GIVEN FRESH SIGNS THAT
IT IS LARGELY OVER JITTERINESS WHICH CHARACTERIZED ITS
BEHAVIOR IN FIRST MONTH AFTER GOWON ANNOUNCED DECISION TO
EXTEND MILITARY RULE INDEFINITELY (LAGOS 10133). GREATER
SELF-CONFIDENCE REPORTED REPAIRGRAM HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED
MOST RECENTLY IN SERIES OF SHARP SLAPS AT CRITICS OF
VARIOUS ASPECTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES.

2. VICTIMS OF TOUGH FMG LINE HAVE BEEN VARIED, AND HAVE
INCLUDED TWO LAWYERS, SEVERAL NEWSMEN, LABOR LEADERS, AND
STUDENTS. ONE ATTORNEY SEEKING RELEASE OF MAN HELD BY POLICE
WITHOUT PROPER ORDER WAS CALLED IN FOR QUESTIONING, WHILE
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DISTINGUISHED LAWYER IN EAST CENTRAL STATE REPRESENTING

CHALLENGERS TO ECS GOVERNMENT OVER TITLE IN ONITSHA MARKET DISPUTE HAS NOW BEEN IN DETENTION FOR ONE WEEK. HARASSMENT OF JOURNALISTS HAS ALSO CONTINUED, WITH THOSE BELIEVED RESPONSIBLE FOR CRITICAL PIECES SPENDING SEVERAL HOURS TO SEVERAL DAYS IN POLICE CUSTODY. GROUP OF LABOR LEADERS WHOSE MEMBERS STAGED STRIKE (TECHNICALLY PROHIBITED) WERE BRIEFLY DETAINED AND SUBSEQUENTLY CHARGED FORMALLY WITH ILLEGAL LABOR ACTIVITIES.

3. MOST DRAMATIC DISPLAY OF FMG'S DETERMINATION TO BROOK NO OPPOSITION CAME ON DECEMBER 4 AND 5, WHEN POLICE USED TEAR GAS TO BREAK UP STUDENT DEMONSTRATION AT JOS CAMPUS OF UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN AND UNIVERSITY SENATE SUBSEQUENTLY ORDERED CAMPUS CLOSED INDEFINITELY. FUNDAMENTAL CAUSE OF STUDENT DISORDER APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN LOCAL GRIEVANCES OVER ALLEGEDLY EXCESSIVE WORKLOAD, BUT STUDENTS GAVE THEIR PROTEST POLITICAL COLOR BY ALSO URGING RELEASE OF APER AKU (DETAINED ACCUSER OF BENUE-PLATEAU GOVERNOR GOMWALK).

4. FMG HARDLINE TACTICS HAVE THUS FAR KEPT LID FIRMLY ON POTENTIAL OPPOSITION. EVEN OFTEN-VOLATILE STUDENTS SEEMINGLY UNPREPARED TO ATTEMPT ANY SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY (PRESUMABLY RECOGNIZING FUTILITY OF SUCH ACTION), AND BOYCOTTS PLANNED OR ORGANIZED BY STUDENT UNIONS AT OTHER CAMPUSES THUS FAR HAVE BEEN SHORT-LIVED. WHILE URGING RELEASE OF APER AKU, NATIONAL UNION OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS HAS CAREFULLY AVOIDED GIVING ITS SANCTION TO SUCH OVERT CHALLENGE AS BOYCOTT ACTION.

5. INTERESTINGLY, DESPITE READINESS USE ITS POWERS OF DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL, FMG STILL APPEARS ANXIOUS TO PRESERVE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF RULE OF LAW. WHEN ATTORNEY QUESTIONED RE HIS EFFORTS TO FREE IMPROPERLY DETAINED CLIENT NONETHELESS PERSISTED IN THOSE EFFORTS, HE FINALLY WAS ABLE FORCE INSPECTOR GENERAL PRODUCE DETAINEE IN COURT AND SUBSEQUENTLY OBTAINED LATTER'S RELEASE ON BAIL OVER FMG OBJECTIONS.

6. COMMENT: AS REPORTED REFAIRGRAM, THERE IS STILL NO SIGN OF SERIOUS THREAT TO FMG CONTROL OVER NIGERIAN POLITICAL SITUATION. THOUGH REACTION TO EVEN FAINTEST STIRRINGS OF OPPOSITION PRESUMABLY DESIGNED TO FORESTALL DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH FMG LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAY FEAR COULD OCCUR IN CONNECTION WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF UDOJI WAGE RECOMMENDATIONS OR IN REACTION TO PRICE RISES EXPECTED TO ACCOMPANY SALARY INCREASES. FMG REMAINS COMMITTED TO ISSUING UDOJI DECISION BEFORE END OF YEAR, AND SMG EXPECTED CONVENE DECEMBER 9 TO PUT FINISHING TOUCHES ON GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER REPORTEDLY HAMMERED OUT AT FIVE-DAY FEC MEETING WHICH ENDED DECEMBER 2. REINHARDT

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